

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# LIFE &

# TRADITION

STAN HONDA/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



A portrait of Jane Austen by British painter Ozias Humphry (1742–1810) on display at Christie's auction house in New York on April 16, 2007.

## Jane Austen's *Unintended Life Lessons for 21st-Century Americans*

Through their depictions of society from over 200 years ago, Austen's novels have a lot to teach today's reader about modern times

JEFF MINICK

Many readers and critics regard Jane Austen (1775–1817) as the greatest of all female novelists, so much so that to make such a statement seems trite. Some even contend that she stands next to Shakespeare in popularity.

Denied fame in her lifetime—Austen published anonymously, in part, to protect the reputation of her father, a clergyman—today, her novels resonate with fans around the world. Young people, especially females, read and reread her works, enraptured



An illustration of Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy by Hugh Thomson from 1894 in "Pride and Prejudice."

by her prose and the Regency era in which she lived.

Writers and directors have brought numerous adaptations of her novels to the screen. For more than a decade, the Dumbarton House in Washington has sponsored an annual Jane Austen Film Festival, and the English city of Bath, where Austen spent quite a bit of time, has hosted both the Jane Austen International Film Festival and the Jane Austen Festival, the latter of which includes a ball where attendees deck themselves out in finery copied from Austen's day.

Continued on Page 2

VETERANS

## Wreaths Across America Honors US Veterans

How one couple's act of patriotism turned into a national annual event

DAVE PAONE

In 2008, more than 60,000 volunteers placed 100,000 wreaths on veterans' headstones nationwide. Recognizing the impact, the U.S. Congress unanimously voted to declare National Wreaths Across America Day to be held annually on the second or third Saturday of December.

A total of 60,000 volunteers and 100,000 wreaths didn't just come together overnight. It was a grassroots movement that started with a married couple's desire to honor our nation's deceased veterans in December 1992.

As the owners of a wreath-making company in Harrington, Maine, the couple found themselves with a large surplus of inventory. With the help of then-Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) and a volunteer with a truck, the husband and two of his teenage children made the 13-hour trek to Arlington National Cemetery to lay 5,000 wreaths on the graves of fallen Civil War veterans.

They didn't know it at the time, but this act would soon be repeated nationwide by far more people than just the four of them.

### Beginnings

The genesis of Wreaths Across America actually occurred decades earlier in 1962, when 12-year-old Morrill Worcester, a paperboy for the Bangor Daily News in Maine, won a trip to Washington. While there, Arlington National Cemetery became an inspirational location for him.

Decades later, Morrill founded Worcester Wreath Co. He and his wife, Karen, were the couple that laid the wreaths in Arlington in 1992.

To this day, Morrill's pilgrimage as a preteen serves as a consistent reminder to him that opportunities stem from the values and freedom afforded to us by our nation's veterans.

Each December following 1992, the Worcesters continued to lay wreaths in Arlington.

Continued on Page 2

COURTESY OF WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA



A wreath marks the grave of veteran Lambert Wouters.





## Jane Austen's Unintended Life Lessons for 21st-Century Americans

Continued from Page 1

More than Austen's considerable literary talents account for this veneration. Though written more than 200 years ago, her stories continue to appeal because of their sage insights into such universal topics as marriage, money, female friendships, male character, and independence. And then, there are the lessons, unintended and unforeseen by Austen, that her novels offer to readers in the turbulent 21st century.

### Reading Between the Lines

I am no Austenian. Though I long ago read "Sense and Sensibility," and once taught "Pride and Prejudice," only recently did I open a copy of "Persuasion," Austen's final novel. It's a story of love and second chances where Anne Elliot, aged 27, finds herself in the company of British Navy Capt. Frederick Wentworth several years after she'd broken off their engagement. Here are the drawing rooms, the beauties of the English countryside, and the sophisticated characters that are hallmarks of Austen's fiction.

Costumed guests arrive for the Pride and Prejudice Ball at Chatsworth House in Derbyshire Dales, England, on June 22, 2013. The event was organized to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the publication of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice."

**Compared to the world of Austen, manners are in short supply.**

But as I made my way through "Persuasion," I began to see Austen's story as less a telescope into the past and more as a mirror for our current age.

She was writing for an audience of her peers, and her observations regarding human nature remain as true now as they were then, but through the men and women she portrays, and through the elegance of her writing, Austen inadvertently points out some deficiencies and imperfections in our own culture.

It was this realization that snagged my attention.

### Language as an Art

To most modern readers, especially those new to Austen, her prose sounds contrived and artificial. Yet, if we compare her writing to the correspondence of our Founding Fathers, we find the same stiff formality.

Here, for instance, is a single sentence from John Adams apologizing to his future bride, Abigail, after previously writing to her of her flaws, a letter with all the eccentricities of that age's grammar and spelling: "My soul and Body have both been thrown into Disorder, by your Ab-



Jane Austen's writing table is displayed at her former home in Chawton, England, on July 18, 2017. Jane Austen spent the last eight years of her life in the cottage in Hampshire from 1809 until 1817.

sence, and a Month or two more would make me the most insufferable Cynick, in the World."

In our time, however, being brief and blunt are the bywords of our compositions and our speech. Were we asked to revise Adams's line, most of us, I suspect, might write, "I really miss you." Our ubiquitous use of social media and texting further encourages us to squeeze thoughts into acronyms, memes, or mere blips of words.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

### VETERANS

Continued from Page 1

## Wreaths Across America Honors US Veterans

### Going Viral

In 2005, a photograph by a Pentagon photographer of Arlington covered in snow and adorned with wreaths circulated on the internet, starting on the Pentagon's website. It "went viral" long before the term was coined. Soon after, thousands of requests poured in via email and phone calls from people wanting to help emulate the Arlington success at the local level, prompting the official formation of Wreaths Across America as a national nonprofit in 2007.

Wreaths Across America currently conducts ceremonies at nearly 3,500 locations in all 50 states, as well as abroad and at sea.

Last year, it placed 2.4 million wreaths and anticipates placing more than 2.7 million this year.

"We do most of the national cemeteries, we do most of the state cemeteries, but our largest growth is in community cemeteries," Karen told The Epoch Times. "It brings communities together."

### Saying the Names

Banksy, the British street artist, once said, "They say you die twice: one time when you stop breathing and a second time, a bit later on, when somebody says your name for the last time."

With that sentiment in mind, when a volunteer lays a wreath at a marker in a ceme-

tery, he says the name of the veteran out loud and thanks him for his service and sacrifice, thus preventing his second death.

### Making It Happen

This year's Wreaths Across America Day is Dec. 17, and the cost to sponsor a wreath is a donation of \$15. The charity has a "five-dollar back program," where \$5 of the \$15 is donated to a local civic group, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars or the American Legion.

"Through that program, we've given back into communities over \$18 million to date," said Karen, who serves as the charity's executive director.

Coordinating tens of thousands of volunteers and 100,000 wreaths for a one-day event is an enormous undertaking.

For starters, they need the wreaths. Although Morrill founded the charity and owns a wreath-making company, he's not an officer of the 501(c)3, and he's not a board member, either. He submits a bid each year through a third party, and whichever company is chosen to supply the wreaths is paid for them.

But perhaps the unsung heroes of the operation are the truckers who transport the wreaths to the far corners of the nation, paying for the fuel out of their own pockets.

"If we didn't have 95 percent of the delivery donated by truck drivers and trucking organizations, it would cost more to deliver them than it ever would to make them," Karen said about the truckers.

These days, when the Worcestersters make the December trip from Maine to Arlington, it's no longer a 13-hour drive in one truck. It's a week-long journey (stopping to meet with various groups along the way) with 150 or more people in a convoy of trucks and buses, often with police and motorcycle escorts, which Karen refers to as a "hoopla."

"We went through one city; they had 800 kids on the side of the road with American flags hollering, 'USA!'" Karen said.

She noted that on that occasion, the buses

We gain speed and brevity, sure, but we sacrifice the subtlety and careful wording of Austen's educated contemporaries. Sophisticated correspondence was then regarded as an art, with certain conventions of speech and composition designed to allow the expression of one's thoughts and emotions without haste, baseness, or crudity.

Lesson No. 1: Austen's example reminds us to take better care of our language and to avoid the coarse expressions we so often employ.

### Drawing Room Etiquette

In "Persuasion," we meet the admirable Lady Russell, former close friend of Anne Elliot's deceased mother who then becomes both friend and mentor to Anne herself. At one point, Austen describes Lady Russell as a "benevolent, charitable, good woman, and capable of strong attachments" who is "most correct in her conduct, strict in her notions of decorum, and with manners that were held a standard of good-breeding."

**Austen advocates for a balance between sense—rational thought—and sensibility, which in her age was a term denoting the emotional side of life.**

Here again, "Persuasion" acts as a mirror for our time, when words such as "decorum" and "good-breeding" have become antiquities.

Not so long ago, for instance, we used to hear older people, usually older men and women, described as "gentlemen" or "ladies," but both forms of address are now under fire, particularly lady, which, for some feminists, is sexist and therefore deemed inappropriate.

Most of us, of course, still practice some form of etiquette, teaching our children to say please and thank you and to hold open a door for the elderly, but compared to the world of Austen, manners are in short supply.

And, like language, those Regency-era formalities had a distinct purpose, which was to give order and form to daily conduct. Just laws offer this same paradox: They set limits on what we're allowed to do but allow a great liberty within the parameters of the law. The formal relations between Anne Elliot and Capt. Wentworth allow them to interact with each other without the awkwardness they might have experienced at a party today.

Lesson No. 2: We can't bring back the manners of the Regency era, nor, I suspect, would most of us want to, but we can adhere to a code of etiquette and decorum that eases difficult social situations and comforts our friends and guests.

### Sense and Sensibility

In her novel by this title, Austen advocates for a balance between sense—rational thought—and sensibility, which in her age was a term denoting the emotional side of life. To fail to maintain that balance, to allow emotions to dominate thought, or vice versa, is usually catastrophic.

"Persuasion" gives us several characters who achieve this equilibrium. In her treatment of a girlhood friend fallen on hard times and her attempts to bring balance to others around her, Anne is a model of such behavior. Her former fiancé, Capt. Wentworth, also keeps a check on his emotions but without allowing pure reason to entirely determine his judgments. Though she occasionally gives Anne poor advice, Lady Russell is also even-tempered and gracious to those around her.

Others lack this stability. Anne's married sister Mary Elliot Musgrove, for example, is a classic self-centered and fretful personality who's often paranoid about the motives of others and who makes a poor wife and mother.

It's unlikely, however, that even in her wildest dreams, Austen ever envisioned a society such as our own, where sentiment so often makes a slave of reason, especially in public. Our politicians pitch their various programs by appealing to our emotions rather than to our common sense, and to hurt someone's feelings on social media is a cardinal sin that can bring out a vengeful mob. Ours is an age of unbridled passions, always galloping from one extreme to the next.

Lesson No. 3: Let heart and head together rule our decisions and actions.

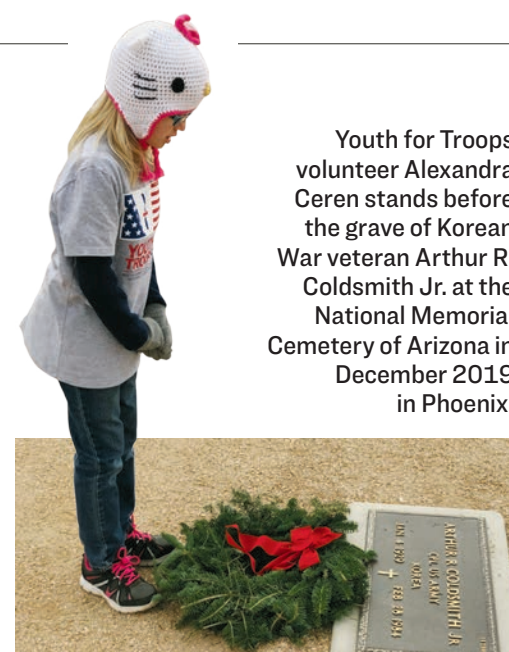
### A Final Note

When Anne realizes that Capt. Wentworth is visiting Bath, where she's living with her family, she ponders that awkward situation.

"She hoped to be wise and reasonable in time," Austen writes about Anne, "but alas! Alas! She must confess to herself that she was not wise yet."

Most of us, whether young or old, might confess that we, too, are "not wise yet." But reading Jane Austen can help us get there.

*Jeff Minick lives and writes in Front Royal, Virginia. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man."*



COURTESY OF YOUTH FOR TROOPS

carried Gold Star mothers and wives, who said the actions of those children made them proud and helped them to heal.

### Youth for Troops

Wreaths Across America also depends on local sponsors.

One such local sponsor is Youth for Troops in Phoenix. It's a youth-led, service-focused nonprofit that offers community service opportunities for all ages to support veterans and deployed service members. It has been sponsoring Wreaths Across America since 2017, with 25 or more volunteers laying wreaths in the National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona each December.

"We were especially honored to place wreaths the last two years on all of the killed-in-action markers at our local cemetery," Tonya Piatt, one of the Youth for Troops founders, told The Epoch Times. "This is especially meaningful because we know the brother, also a veteran, of one of these heroes."

Hannah Piatt, Tonya's daughter and another founder of the nonprofit, told The Epoch Times that "it means a whole lot more when you can put a face to the family."

Tonya is also acquainted with the fallen

soldier's mother and surviving brother.

"He takes his mom out there to visit, and to know that the wreath was waiting for them is nice," she said.

In addition to volunteering to place the wreaths each December, a smaller group of volunteers from Youth for Troops returns to the cemetery each January to retire the wreaths and brush any detached needles off the markers.

Tonya's other daughter, Heather Piatt, is also a founder of Youth for Troops. When she lays a wreath on a grave, she looks at the veteran's birth and death dates and calculates his age in her head. At 20 years old, many of the fallen were roughly her age, and she assumes they most likely had plans for a career and family, just as she does now.

"I can't imagine not wanting to take a few moments out of my day to respect that and honor that and say their names, so their family knows that these 18, 19, 20-year-olds aren't forgotten for their sacrifices," she told The Epoch Times.

While Youth for Troops volunteers on the local level in Phoenix, Tonya is glad to be part of a national movement.

"There are opportunities for people and families in every part of the region to volunteer on that December date," she said. "It's a great thought that all of these people are volunteering on the same day to honor our heroes."



Volunteers help distribute wreaths provided by Wreaths Across America.



Every good deed is overseen by the divine, and, according to Thomas Aquinas, does not go unrewarded.

## A Worthwhile Proverb? 'No Good Deed Goes Unpunished'

While there's controversy over the origin and intention of this saying, one thing is for certain: In this day and age, it isn't easy to be good

### ANGELICA REIS

The saying "No good deed goes unpunished" has always intrigued me. I've wondered whether it has ancient origins, like so many other proverbs, and was curious about the context from which it was born. I've also always had mixed feelings about it, wondering about the intention behind the saying and whether it's a good saying to use.

My research has uncovered some interesting things, and the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of this proverb has been a good chance for growth. In short, I think the saying contains profound truth, especially in these troubled times.

**In many arenas, good and evil have been turned on their heads.**

### Fiction's Proverb

The origins of our modern version of the saying are somewhat unclear, but it may trace back to a 12th-century Latin text, "De Nugis Curialium" by courtier Walter Map, which describes a most terrible fictional character, a character who adheres to a sort of inverted morality and is described as follows:

"He put the worst of men to command the bad, he gave additional authority and power to those who were wickedest in their attacks on the innocent, and promoted over all others those to whom pity was unknown. He spared none of his band who inclined to spare any, left no good deed unpunished, no bad one unrewarded; and when he could find no rival and no rebel on earth, like Capaneus, he challenged opposition from heaven. He spoiled churches, violated churches, and desisted not either for fear of the living or respect for the dead."

I was very struck upon reading the description of this character; I'll let you draw your own conclusions as to why. Over time, as with most proverbs, the saying appeared in various contexts and took on a variety of forms.

It's found, for example, in Brendan Gill's 1950 novel, "The Trouble of One House." And for those who've seen the 2003 Broadway musical "Wicked," you may remember the song "No Good Deed." A thought-provoking poem by Franklin Pierce Adams with the title "No Good Deed Goes Unpunished (So Shines a Good Deed in a Naughty World)" also contains the phrase and concept.

Which brings me to exactly the conclusion I reached after reflecting upon the state of our world today in relation to this idea: that a good deed shines in

a naughty world, and that the negative side of society does react when people are good.

### Good Deeds Shine

Perhaps we're living in inverted times—an inversion similar to the one embraced by the character in Map's story above. In many arenas, good and evil have been turned on their heads. (Reading The Epoch Times is a helpful reminder of this, while at the same time being a heartening assurance of the good community of folks still out there.)

Think of all the people who have been "canceled" in recent times for refusing to go along with the inversion of good and evil. They have certainly been punished for their good deeds. We know, for example, that raising concerns with one's local school board or library about books we may deem unhealthy for our children takes a lot of courage, and that we may be "punished" for it somehow.

The list goes on. Yes, it's likely that this principle has always been true in the world—what Jesus, many of the apostles, and the saints endured are prime examples of the principle of being punished for goodness. Ditto for people of faith everywhere. It's a profound story that lies beyond the scope of today's humble column.

But ultimately, we know that everything unfolding in our world is being watched from on high and is being overseen.

So in that vein, I propose this new version of the saying:

"No good deed goes unpunished or unrewarded."

There's surely both punishment and reward for goodness. Sometimes, we see the rewards here in our lives on earth; sometimes, we don't. Yet, we know that they will come.

To set the record straight, I'll leave you with a passage from "Summa Theologica" by Thomas Aquinas:

"For as punishment is to the evil act, so is reward to a good act. Now no evil deed is unpunished by God the just judge. Therefore no good deed is unrewarded, and so every good deed merits some good."

Keep on keeping on. Keep up your voices, and be willing to take the "punishment"—as The Epoch Times and especially its reporters in Asia have done. And remember, too, that no good deed goes unrewarded.

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### A NATIONWIDE EFFORT

Wreaths Across America currently conducts ceremonies at nearly 3,500 locations in all 50 states, as well as abroad and at sea.

Both young and old appreciate the wreaths provided to national, state, and community cemeteries across the country.



## CULTURE

# A Counterpunch to the Assault on Manliness

JEFF MINICK

On a mid-October visit with my daughter and her family, my son-in-law began recounting stories from a former construction job. He spoke of end-of-day contests—monkey-bar style races, for example, in which construction workers would race across the trusses of a building using hammers instead of the hands, which lasted until one guy slipped and concussed himself with the hammer.

My friend John, a former concrete laborer, added his tale about the time a chunk of cement fell and whacked him in the head, sending him to the emergency room with blood streaming down his face.

I chipped in with tales from my long-ago military school days, when fights broke out at a misspoken insult and where battles using bent paperclips and rubber bands for slings could leave a welt like a bee sting on the skin of the victim. Such escapades apparently still exist in a few places, as my teenage grandson, visiting from his all-male boarding school, also recounted stories of dorm fights and concussions.

All of these activities involve physical strength, an element of danger, a lack of prudence sometimes approaching lunacy, creativity—only a boy would make a weapon of paperclips and rubber band—and a tough hide. Many male readers could easily add their own exploits to this list. But such manliness is gradually disappearing from society.

That's unfortunate, because these male traits and others are crucial for the building of civilization, a fact that author and professor Anthony Esolen points out in his recent book, "No Apologies: Why Civilization Depends on the Strength of Men." Down through the ages, Esolen contends, men have constructed everything from cities to castles to superhighways, founded governments, written constitutions, fought wars, protected their women and their children, and given the world much of its great art.

But no more. As Esolen notes in the very first sentence, "I am writing a book that should not have to be written, to return to men a sense of their worth as men, and to give to boys the noble aim of manliness, an aim which is their due by right."

That phrase "noble aim of manliness" may induce heart palpitations in some people in our feminist culture. Indeed, that old-fashioned word "manliness" alone would doubtless raise the hackles of gender radicals intent on refashioning men into pajama boys unsuited for erecting skyscrapers, fending off enemies in a war, or being good husbands and fathers.

Esolen is correct that such a book about the noble aim of manliness shouldn't have to be written. Over the centuries, writers have authored many books and essays on the meaning of manhood and its virtues—Theodore Roosevelt comes immediately to mind—but a book calling for the restoration of manhood itself is rare. But after decades of



The author reminisces about his younger days—"activities [involving] physical strength, an element of danger, a lack of prudence sometimes approaching lunacy, creativity."

BIBI AYTUNCH

**We must reverse course and, in this case, restore the honor and respect due to manhood if we hope to repair the foundations of civilization.**

men and manhood taking hits like a heavy bag in a gym, however, "No Apologies" is also absolutely necessary, a counterpunch to the ongoing cultural assault on manliness.

C.S. Lewis prophetically sensed this assault on virility when he wrote in "The Abolition of Man," "In a sort of ghastly simplicity we remove the organ and demand the function. We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful."

Esolen examines the horrific wounds inflicted by this surgery of "ghastly simplicity" and the damage it has done not only to men, but to marriage, the family, and our culture at large. The picture is not pretty.

"If you look at the present state of the world it's pretty plain that humanity has been making some big mistake," Lewis advises in "The Case for Christianity." "We're on the wrong road. And if that is so we must go back. Going back is the quickest way on."

Like Lewis, Esolen tells us that we must reverse course and, in this case, restore the

honor and respect due to manhood if we hope to repair the foundations of civilization. Given "the present state of the world," most of us would likely agree.

*This article was originally published on Intellectual Takeout.*

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## RELIGION

# The Crisis of Well-Being Among Young Adults and the Decline of Religiosity

JENET ERICKSON

For decades, well-being across adulthood has followed what social scientists call a "U-shaped pattern": higher well-being in young adulthood, a dip during midlife, and increased well-being in older age.

But earlier this year, the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University released troubling findings showing that there has been a complete flattening out of the left side of this U-curve. The well-being of young adults has dramatically declined compared to older age groups—a decline that is much larger for age than for any other variable, including gender or race.

As reported in JAMA Psychiatry, "Our findings support evidence of a mental health crisis and increase in loneliness in the U.S. that has disproportionately affected young adults" and extends "to multiple additional facets of well-being beyond mental health." Happiness, physical health, meaning, character, social relationships, and financial stability have all significantly declined for young adults.

In the words of Tyler J. VanderWeele, one of the authors of the study, this goes beyond a mental health crisis, with "potentially dire implications for the future of our nation."

## Looming Crisis

Potential causes for the mental health crisis among youth and young adults have been part of an ongoing cultural discussion. As the National Alliance on Mental Illness recently suggested, social media's "constant comparisons and challenges to keep up with the pressure to perform," the expectation that you need to "always be on" that is part of a technological world, the grief and fear resulting from a global crisis, and constant access to troubling news cycles surely all play a role.

But the decline across so many aspects of well-being suggests something even more fundamental is at work. VanderWeele calls it a crisis in meaning and identity, and with it, a crisis in connection. His conclusions parallel those of Columbia University's Lisa Miller, whose extensive work as a clinical psychologist and brain researcher led her to conclude that it's "the absence of support for children's spiritual growth"—the innate set of perceptual capacities through which we experience connection, unity, love, and a sense of guidance from the life force in and through us—that has contributed to alarming rates of depression, substance abuse, addictive behaviors, and decreased well-being.

## The Role of Religion

As VanderWeele and Miller both note, religion has traditionally supplied this essential support with significant implications for adolescent development and health. In fact, evidence suggests that religious involvement may have even more profound health effects for adolescence than for adulthood, with far-reaching implications across the life course. A 2003 review of research on the role of religion in the lives of American adolescents attempted to summarize what was known up to that time.

Among other positive effects, the report found striking and consistent relationships between adolescent religiosity and healthy lifestyle behaviors, a modest relationship between religiosity and self-esteem and moral

self-worth, and "modest protective effects" against alcohol, smoking, and drug use. Stronger effects were reported for sexual activity with multiple facets of religiosity, including attendance, the importance of faith, and denomination, typically predicting later sexual engagement and less risky behaviors.

Recent research incorporating more robust methodological designs has confirmed what these other cross-sectional studies found:

Religious participation in adolescence is associated with greater psychological well-being, character strengths, and lower risks of mental illness. For example, a recent longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of adolescents found that religious observance reduced probabilities for drug use, risky sexual behaviors, and depression. Miller similarly found that adolescents who had a positive, active relationship to spirituality were significantly less likely to use and abuse substances (40 percent less likely), experience depression (60 percent), or engage in risky or unprotected sex (80 percent).

## Why Religion Is Impactful

Understanding the mechanisms through which religion positively impacts adolescent and young adult development further clarifies the expanse of its influence. Previous research suggested that religion was largely about social control—encouraging adolescents "not do something they otherwise might

have done." But it quickly became clear that a more multi-faceted theory of religious influence was necessary, including how religion shapes them through the families in which they grow up.

As noted in the 2003 review of research, research consistently confirms the "common sense notion" that parents and their own religious practices are among "the strongest influences on the religious behavior of adolescents." That means, of course, how parents model and teach religious behaviors. But it also means that religion shapes how parents relate to their children, whether in more authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive ways, influencing the quality of the relationship through which their

religious beliefs are transmitted.

Christian Smith's extensive research of adolescent religiosity led him to articulate three additional mechanisms through which religion positively impacts adolescent and young adult well-being. First, religion provides a set of moral orders that delineate good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable ways of being, and a focus on "virtuousness," including self-regulation, a strong sense of self, and compassion for others. Second, religious participation builds competencies, including coping skills, knowledge, and cultural capital, which strengthen health, social status, and "life chances." Finally, religious participation opens relationship ties with adults and peers who provide helpful resources and opportuni-

ties, emotional support and guidance in their development, and models of demonstrated life paths from which to pattern their own lives.

Miller's research drawing on MRI images of the brain suggests an even more foundational reality about religious engagement, with particular importance given the unique challenges of today's adolescents and young adults. Miller has identified areas in the brain oriented specifically to the capacity for transcendent awareness. As her brain imaging research indicates, each person is born with a set of perceptual capacities to connect with the transcendent through which we experience unity, love, and connection, and a sense that we are held and guided. When we "make full use" of these natural capacities, our brains become structurally healthier, indicated by a thicker cortex in the regions of perception; increasing access to psychological benefits, including less depression, anxiety, and substance abuse; and increased access to positive psychological traits, including grit, resilience, optimism, and creativity.

## Healing a Struggling Generation

These realities have particular significance given the crises of meaning, identity, and connection among adolescents and young adults. In fact, as Miller articulates, it's the strength and use of these natural spiritual capacities that allows adolescents and young adults to move from "loneliness and isolation to connection; from competition and division to compassion and altruism; from an entrenched focus on our wounds, problems, and losses to an openness to the journey of life." That sense of connection to a transcendent source takes an adolescent beyond a "pieces and parts model of identity" and "a splintered, fragmented view of self," she argues, to a deep awareness of "who we are to one another" and a way of being built on love and connection.

But if that innate spiritual capacity isn't nourished, it will atrophy. That is why Miller, VanderWeele, and others are particularly concerned that young adults today have grown up far less likely to have participated in formal worship services or observed religious behaviors in their parents. As the American Enterprise Institute's Daniel Cox recently reported, American religious identity has experienced "nearly three decades of consistent decline," so that Generation Z is "the least religious generation yet."

For Miller, that means the hardwired capacity for transcendence—with all that it means in strengthening meaning, identity, and connection—is completely unformed for the vast majority of adolescence and young adults.

No wonder, then, that our young people are in such a crisis. At the same time, there is now greater research-informed understanding that spirituality, whether tied (as it most often is) to a religious tradition or not, is fundamental to our individual and social well-being. That increased understanding provides direction for a potentially powerful key to healing a generation of lonely and struggling adolescents and young adults.

*This article was originally published on the Institute for Family Studies blog.*

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# Former Model Spreads Message of Chastity and Hope

Pro-life advocate Amada Rose Pérez speaks out

COURTESY OF AMADA ROSE PÉREZ



Formerly a model, Amada Rose Pérez now advocates for her faith and the pro-life movement.

## LOUISE CHAMBERS

God and chastity are at the core of the message that former Colombian model and actress Amada Rose Pérez shares with other women.

Pérez became a model in Colombia at the age of 18. She made a name for herself by representing famous brands and in her role as Sofía Granados in the popular telenovela, "La Costeña y el Cachaco." Once pressured into an abortion for the sake of her career as a younger woman, Pérez—now 45 and married—has since channeled her immense suffering into a testimony to guide women toward true freedom: a path that begins with respecting one's own body and never ends with the tragedy of abortion.

A mother to a 5-year-old son, Pérez has devoted herself to her spiritual faith and finds strength and comfort in her relationship with God.

At the core of Pérez's message is a desire to embolden women to make the right choices, and one choice she supports is abstinence before marriage.

"We think we're mature enough to have premarital relations but too immature to assume the responsibility of motherhood," she said in an interview with Aleteia. "Pregnancy is the most natural thing that can result from the union of man and woman, but when it's outside the context of marriage it brings fear and anxiety."

Pérez, now a pro-life advocate, was never in favor of abortion, but when she became pregnant years ago, her decision to terminate the pregnancy was governed by a common decisive factor—fear.

"I was pressured by my partner, and I believed in what they told me, that the most important thing was my dreams and my professional success," she told the online publication. "I also had suicidal thoughts. I believed that I wasn't worthy to go on living because I had killed my child, and I suffered from a fixation on memories related to the abortion."

Besides psychological trauma, Pérez wants others to be aware of the potential physical risks of abortion, including sterility, damage to the woman's internal organs, and possible death. But she believes one of the "most common consequences" of terminating a pregnancy is the loss of tenderness of heart.

Pérez said she has the opportunity to give her testimony by "the grace of God," but she knows there are many women of faith who find it hard to talk about their abortions because "it's too painful and shameful."

"Those who have had abortions and appear calm are just keeping up appearances; I went out in interviews smiling, but inside, my heart was broken," she told the media outlet.

On Feb. 21, abortion in Colombia was made legal up until the 24th week of preg-

nancy. While pro-choice advocates have coined the phrase "voluntary interruption of pregnancy" to support the legalization, Pérez has a problem with this euphemism.

"What if I want to resume my pregnancy? Who gives me back my children?" she told the website Aleteia. "We're living in a culture of motherhood and is damaging the minds and hearts of girls and women who think that if they end the life of their children they will be free. On the contrary, that makes them slaves."

"What we must ask ourselves is who is behind this. Behind abortion is a big business run by men who make women believe that they're fighting for their rights when what they're doing is harming their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health."

In the controversial case of babies conceived in rape, Pérez maintains that the guilt lies with the rapist, advocating for better support for women and babies.

"I don't know any woman who has had an abortion and has not lived through hell, but I know many mothers who have had their children, and they are their greatest blessing and their happiness," said Pérez, who speaks publicly and shares inspirational messages on her Instagram page.

"I'm simply a grain of sand. God allowed me to be a public figure to give his messages. I only ask him to never let go of me and to be able to do his will."

# A Boy and His Horse

Hank Boyd learns life lessons while taking care of his mare, Willow

## ANNA MASON

He may only be 4, but little Hank Boyd can walk a horse like a true cowboy. Never away from his 18-year-old mare, Willow, the two lead a ranch lifestyle out in Montana.

It all started when the Boyd family—parents Amy and Ben and their three children—moved from California to The Treasure State (a nickname for Montana), where cowboy culture is alive and well.

Hank started seeing cowboys and instantly wanted a cowboy hat and boots. Knowing that all cowboys ride horses, the budding ranchero couldn't wait to get going. And so the family welcomed Willow in October 2021.

"He had a connection with her from the beginning when we got her," Amy Boyd, 30, told The Epoch Times. "There's a connection that, I feel, is different from just playing with friends."

At first, Hank would simply walk the much bigger Willow around on a lead rope. In no time, however, Hank was up in the saddle and doing all the things that real cowboys do, such as brushing and feeding.

While Willow loves grabbing his hat all the time, Hank's favorite thing is feeding her treats. "She knows that she's going to get treats, so she gets excited for them," Boyd said. "When we go down to the field, she comes running right up to the gate, happy to see us, but especially him. She definitely favors him."

For Boyd, it's been wonderful to see the close bond develop. Her son has grown more confident, riding and taking care of Willow every day after kindergarten.

The family lives on 16 acres of land, complete with dogs, chickens, and their horse. When sisters Molly, 10, and Hannah, 8, were having riding lessons,

their baby brother Hank would watch and learn from them. "They'd go and get the stuff to saddle up, and now, Hank just runs and grabs the saddle himself, copying what they do. Now, he does it all,"

Amy Boyd said. Personality-wise, Willow is a little stubborn, and Hank can act silly, bringing out her playful side. The result is pure fun and laughter. Teaching kindness to all her three children is "the most important thing" for Boyd. And the proud mom believes that animals, too, can help teach kids a lot of things.

She said the kids help a lot with taking care of the animals every day, and each little task becomes a playful lesson.

"We have to care for this animal; somebody has to go feed it and somebody has to brush it," she said. "Even with the chickens, we



ALONESH/SHUTTERSTOCK

As religious influence declines, today's youths have lost an important transmitter of positive models, moralities, and competencies.



After his family moved to Montana, Hank saw cowboys everywhere and immediately wanted his own hat and boots.

have to feed them and go collect the eggs. They provide for us, we provide for them type [of] thing. It really helps teach them responsibility from a young age, because you know, we're going to have this animal and have fun with it and ride it, but we also have to be responsible.

"It's good to see your kids succeeding and just kind of doing things on their own. It makes me really happy."

*Share your stories with us at emg.inspired@epochtimes.com, and continue to get your daily dose of inspiration by signing up for the Inspired newsletter at: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/newsletter>*



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMY BOYD

Hank Boyd and his mare, Willow.



DEAR JUNE *On Family and Relationships*

# Ostracized Sister Seeks to Mend Sibling Rift

Dear June,

I am the oldest of four children, and after my mother was unable, I was designated to organize family gatherings for holidays and birthdays; these celebrations were often dinners at my mother's house. After she died in 1998, my brother bought the house, and we continued to hold celebrations there.

After my mother's passing, my sister, who is five years younger, became moody and somewhat distant. At one point, my uncle in Oregon asked if I could organize a family reunion. I emailed to ask who could participate and what dates would be best. After a few days, I sent another email, and my sister responded, asking why I was the one always organizing and planning. My brothers waited without responding to see how it worked out. In the end, we had a lovely family reunion, although my sister and her family didn't attend, and over the next 10 to 12 years, we spoke infrequently.

In 2016, my sister and her husband moved close to us, and we saw each other occasionally. When she was diagnosed with breast cancer, she called me to talk; when she wanted help with her house, I helped her; when she had an accident on her horse, I was the one called to sit with her in the hospital while she prepped for surgery. At the time, I asked why she called me after the way she treated me for years. Her reply was, "I knew that no matter how badly you treated me, you would always help if I needed you."

In 2020, the COVID-19 quarantine hit and lives changed. On Mother's Day, my sister invited us and her daughter to her house for a socially distanced, outdoor lunch, which was very pleasant. It was the last pleasant get-together of any type. Afterwards, I was shunned, ghosted; phone calls and texts not returned. Finally, my sister called to say I was depressed and needed to be on antidepressants for her to be around me. She blocked my phone, unfriended me on Facebook, hosted Christmas for the family but I was not invited. After visiting my sister, my brother is now cautious around me because she told him not to share photos or information with me. And that is where we stand.

I went to my GP for blood work and a depression test, and my doctor said I was not depressed. I am now 70 years old, and facing the last good decade of my life. I would like it to be happy and fun-filled. I have several friends who know this story and insist she is wrong and I am the most positive, upbeat friend they have. I no longer know who or what is real. So my question is: Other than continuing to smile through the pain and take care of friends and my family, is there anything I could or should do?

Sincerely, *Confused and Conflicted Sister*

(This question has been edited for brevity and clarity.)

→ **Dear Confused and Conflicted Sister,**

It sounds like your sister is a complicated person, and her actions as you describe them are neither kind nor charitable. I'd like to offer some thoughts that might help you to resolve or at least make the best of the situation.

But before I do, I would just like to say that you do have the option to write her out of your life completely. In the end, this may be the best option, but that is for your heart to tell you after careful consideration and reflection. Family is important, and these precious bonds should not be casually broken.

First, I'd like to consider your question, "Who or what is real?" We can't always answer this question fully in regard to difficult situations we are involved in, because we lack perspective and can't always know what is in the hearts and minds of others. But we can use this as an opportunity to see where our own hearts and minds are, and this can be invaluable. When we live up to our own highest principles, we have a clean conscience and sincere heart—and then we can have peace, even if



BIBA KAYEWICH

Confused and Conflicted Sister, who submitted her question to "Dear June," last saw her sister at a socially distanced lunch during the pandemic.

others treat us unfairly.

There are two principles that I would like to highlight, which I would call part of a universal standard for being a good person.

One is a reverence for truth—the desire and determined pursuit to live our lives by what is real, even if it's uncomfortable.

The other is love and compassion—even when it's uncomfortable and inconvenient.

From the way you phrased your question, it seems like harmonious family togetherness is a great source of happiness to you. And the fact that you went to your doctor to check for symptoms of depression (with the only evidence being your sister's recommendation), and that you are questioning yourself, to me is a sign that you also value truth.

“

**After my mother's passing, my sister, who is five years younger, became moody and somewhat distant.**

*Confused and Conflicted Sister*

Now, let us look at your sister through the lens of truth and compassion. We cannot really know what is in her heart, so it may not be that she is intentionally lying; she may lack discernment and actually believe that what she has said about you is true. We can't fault her for lack of discernment; people are born with different capacities for this. However, she has not behaved kindly or fairly toward you. For example, a compassionate person who saw their sister depressed might say gently, "I see you are having a hard time. How can I help?" But your sister only said she could not tolerate you unless you went on medication, and clearly no one, from your doctor to your friends, agrees with her.

It may very well be that because of something inside her, being around you makes her feel depressed, and she is confusing what she feels with what is actually coming from you. Her logic might be, "I feel depressed when I see her; therefore, I must be picking up her energy." If this is the case, it sounds like she is not very well in touch with herself.

You might be wondering, why is she this way?

One reason might be the character she was born with. Anyone with multiple children knows that they are born with their own personalities, sometimes radically different from anyone else in the family. And if you have multiple siblings, you can see that people raised under very similar conditions also can turn out very differently. So perhaps it will help you to think back: What was your sister like as a child? How would you describe your relationship with her when you were young? How was her relationship with your parents? With other people?

You mentioned that something seemed to change in her after your mother passed away. Perhaps the grief triggered something in her? Could it be that, perhaps, she always felt she could never be as good or capable as her older sister, and that is why she is upset that the hosting role fell to you? Or maybe she is jealous of you for another reason.

At any rate, I think it's true to say that your relationship is painful to her; why, I can only speculate. Although, when she is facing other pain or difficulty (like after her accident), she is able to put aside the bad feelings and know that she can count on you. To me, this suggests that whatever is going on inside her is something emotional, and not something you need to take as an indication of something wrong in you.

However, there is one thing you could consider: Have you perhaps unintentionally hurt her feelings? It could have started in childhood. Younger siblings naturally look up to older ones, so their hearts can be very vulnerable. Even a casual dismissal (that you may not even remember) might have hurt her. Also, if one of your parents made comments to the effect that your younger sister should be more like you—perhaps with the intention of encouraging her—this might have made her feel that she was not as good as you and created hurt and resentment in her.

So if you can find out what is at the root of her unhappiness, your sincere apology for how she feels—even if it was not your fault—could help her begin to heal her wounds. Even if you don't know what you did wrong in her mind, you can sincerely apologize for making her feel bad. This can have the effect of breaking straight through her defensive wall, and then she may eventually begin to heal and someday tell you

what is really hurting her.

Another thing you could do is try speaking to her daughter; she might have some insight into the situation that you do not. If you do contact her daughter, I would keep it completely in the vein of kindness, concern, and wanting a resolution to this conflict. You want to avoid making the daughter feel like she needs to choose between love and loyalty to her mother and talking to you.

Another thing I would do is reach out to your other siblings and spend some quality time with them and their individual families. Invite them over for dinner, or whatever would be a pleasant way to connect, so they can see for themselves how and who you are. You don't have to bring up the issue with your sister at all, unless it really seems appropriate or they ask you. You could perhaps mention that you missed seeing them at the holidays last year and would very much like to celebrate with them this year.

However, if your sister invites everyone over for a holiday except you, just let it be. Continue to connect and spend quality time with individual families over the next year; this way, they will have ample chance to see how both you and your sister behave. Then, they will be able to make their own choice about the situation. But be prepared: It may be that some family members take a long time to realize that the issue is with your sister rather than with you, so patience will be important! If you can keep your heart strong, loving, and filled with goodwill toward your family, and do your utmost to maintain harmony, this will be a very effective way to undo this complicated situation.

Sincerely,  
June

*Do you have a family or relationship question for our advice columnist, Dear June? Send it to DearJune@EpochTimes.com or Attn: Dear June, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY, 10001*

**June Kellum** is a married mother of three and longtime Epoch Times journalist covering family, relationships, and health topics.

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The Upper Belvedere palace in the center of Vienna, Austria. The building is composed of a long range of 29 bays, articulated as seven octagonal pavilions, with ornamented pilasters and window surrounds. These pavilions are in a typical 18th-century French design, which can be seen in the Tuileries Garden in Paris or at the Palace of Versailles.

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

## The Belvedere

DRAMA, GRANDEUR, AND OPULENCE TIMES 2

ARIANE TRIEBSWETTER

The Belvedere Palace in Vienna, Austria, is actually two structures—the Upper and Lower Belvederes, each with its own history and purpose—and is a masterpiece of late-Baroque architecture that has sat in the city's third district for more than 300 years.

Originally, the Belvedere was built for Prince Eugene of Savoy, who wanted a summer residence outside the city limits in an undeveloped area called Landstrasse. The prince commissioned renowned Baroque architect Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt to build him not one, but two palaces inspired by Versailles, completing the Lower Belvedere in 1716 and the Upper Belvedere in 1723. The estate also includes an orangery and stables.

The Belvedere's architecture is characterized by complex shapes from the late-

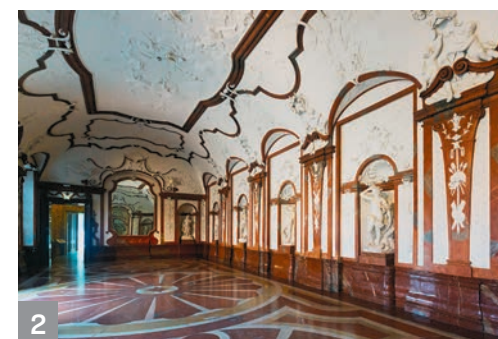
Baroque era that radiate a sense of drama, grandeur, and opulence. It also has a Rococo influence, a late-Baroque decorative style that is ornamental and theatrical. The Upper Belvedere is a sumptuous display of grandeur. The entrance hall, for example, has ornate decorations and intricate sculptural carvings. The Lower Belvedere houses breathtakingly magnificent rooms, such as the Gold Cabinet, which is extensively decorated with mirrors.

When Empress Maria Theresa acquired the estates after the prince's death, she turned the Upper Belvedere into an exhibition space that later became one of the world's first public museums. Today, the Belvedere holds invaluable art collections dating from the Middle Ages to the present. Art is everywhere in this Austrian architectural jewel.

*Ariane Triebswetter is an international freelance journalist, with a background in modern literature and classical music.*



A view of Vienna from the Belvedere gardens, situated between both palaces. "Belvedere" comes from the Italian words "bel" (beautiful) and "vedere" (view), and means "beautiful view." Here, the view is the magnificent garden, which is in a French-Baroque style, complete with large water basins, symmetrical flower beds, and trimmed edges.



1. In contrast, the Lower Belvedere palace has a simpler appearance, with a white, single-story façade of 35 bays and straight wings around a courtyard. It faces the garden and has the general appearance of an orangery, a fashionable conservatory that would protect citrus fruit trees during winter. Indeed, it has an orangery, though over the years this has been converted into stables, in 1805; the Museum of Medieval Art, in 1952; and an exhibition space, in 2007.

2. The Marble Gallery in the Lower Belvedere features sculptures by Baroque sculptor Domenico Parodi. The walls of the gallery are embellished with stucco war trophies to reflect Prince Eugene's military successes, and the ceiling relief depicts the prince being honored with awards. The contrast of textures and materials used is typical of the Baroque style.

3. The Marble Hall, located in the Upper Belvedere, is two stories high and shows the importance of marble and gliding in the Baroque architectural style.

4. This room covered in gold in the Lower Belvedere is known as the Gold Cabinet. The walls are embellished with mirrors and porcelains with floral motifs in the highly decorative Rococo style, much inspired by flora and fauna.

5. The grand staircase of the Upper Belvedere is made of stucco, a material heavily used in both Baroque and Rococo architectures to provide a smooth decorative transition from the walls to the ceiling.

6. An impressive ceiling fresco by Italian fresco artist Carlo Innocenzo Carlone, in the Painted Hall in the Upper Belvedere, depicts the Triumphs of Aurora. Typical of Rococo interiors, the fresco features a pastel palette of light blues, yellows, and pinks.



EDUCATION

# Charlotte Mason's Living Educational Philosophy Transforms Learning



Mason placed importance on 'living books,' written by authors passionate about a subject.

The British educator's Home Education Series, first published in 1886, revolutionized education by focusing on the home, relationships, and engagement

KAREN DOLL

Charlotte Maria Mason was born in 1842 in the village of Garth (now Bangor) in northern Wales. She was homeschooled from a young age and spent her days exploring nature and falling in love with learning. When she was orphaned at 16, she traveled to London to live with friends. There, she attended the Home and Colonial School Society, a teacher training school, where she flourished. Eventually, Mason became one of the most influential British educators in the UK. Her Home Education Series, the first volume of which was published in 1886, revolutionized education and remains a homeschooling classic to this day. Mason's philosophy, referred to as "the gentle art of learning" in Karen Andreola's 1998 book, "A Charlotte Mason Companion," ever so subtly sparks children's curiosity and imagination. Mason encourages them to explore fascinating topics and to fall in love with learning—just like young Charlotte did. Here is a closer look at some of the core principles of a Charlotte Mason education.

**An Enriching Home Atmosphere** Mason said that "a child draws inspiration from the casual life around him." She believed that the home atmosphere represented one-third of a child's education. An ideal home environment is one in which healthy communication is the norm and all family members respect one another. Children are free to express themselves without fear of judgment,

knowing that they can discuss anything with their parents. Mason, a true pioneer in her day, also believed in a living education—nourishing children with ideas. "It is the very nature of an idea to grow," Mason wrote. "Fairly implant an idea in the child's mind, and it will secrete its own food, grow, and bear fruit in the form of a succession of kindred ideas." Introduce your children to a multitude of ideas every day by creating an enriching home environment filled with great music and literature, an appreciation of art, the study of nature, biographies of great men and women, plays, fascinating narratives from history, and scientific discoveries. Your children will form meaningful connections with the ideas that appeal to them, prompting new thoughts and ideas to develop. The new ideas will connect with other ideas already present in their minds; then, these grow and spark more ideas, and so on. Ideas become interests, and interests nurture delight-directed learning. Children who learn in this way are motivated to delve deeper and deeper and, as a result, excel at self-education.

**Relationships** According to Mason, relationships are the building blocks of a quality education. She encouraged parents to provide children with myriad opportunities to interact and develop relationships with many different kinds of people, places, and things in the world around them. She suggests setting the stage by ensuring that your children have these three essential opportunities every day: some-

thing or someone to love, something to do, and something to think about. A loving family naturally provides a child with many opportunities to love. A child's love for a special pet—a favorite chicken, cat, or even larger livestock—can supplement this need beautifully. Something to do comes with one condition: Your child's "something" should have value and be meaningful. For example, your child can help plan, cook, and serve dinner, put together and deliver a care package to an elderly neighbor, help a younger sibling with schoolwork, or work on a craft project. You can help your kids grow into caring adults by encouraging them to serve others lovingly and humbly.

## Mason's philosophy ever so subtly sparks children's curiosity and imagination.

And, lastly, something to think about can be found in a newspaper article, great literature, or what Mason referred to as living books—books written by an author who is passionate about the subject matter and stimulates an emotional connection with his or her readers. Or, perhaps your family is considering adopting a dog; undoubtedly everyone will have plenty to think about.

**An Adaptable Engaging School Day** Mason's innovative methods center on adapting the school day to meet the unique developmental and academic needs of

children while simultaneously engaging in meaningful activities and sparking their curiosity about the world around them. A typical school day is characterized by short lessons, living books, narration, no homework, and free afternoons. She found that shorter lessons of approximately 15 to 20 minutes for young students, 20 to 30 minutes for middle-grade students, and 30 to 45 minutes for older students kept them engaged for the entire lesson without their attention waning. And living books lay the foundation for perfecting the art of narration—which is, simply, the act of retelling. A child should retell, in his or her own words, what he or she has just listened to or read. Mason believed that this is the way that children learn best; it also provides the optimal way to assess a child's comprehension. Narration is a powerful tool for strengthening thinking skills as children work to remember facts, organize their thoughts, and put them into words. And, when used consistently, there is no need for homework because, as Mason observed, children retained more information that lasted for longer periods of time. Free afternoons are for leisure pursuits such as practicing musical instruments, working on crafts and projects, climbing trees, exploring nature, serving a needy family, or visiting friends. *Karen Doll is a freelance writer and homeschooling consultant based in the small village of Wassergass, Pa. She enjoys writing about homeschooling, gardening, food and culture, family life, and the joys of chicken-keeping. Visit her at AtHomeWithKarenDoll.wordpress.com*

FAMILY

# The 4th Quarter: Finish the Year Strong

Now that we're heading into the last quarter of the year, take measures to set yourself up for a fantastic holiday season and new year

BARBARA DANZA

And just like that, 2022 is headed toward the finish line. As we navigate the fourth quarter of the year, there are a few things that we can do to finish strong, enjoy the holiday season, and set ourselves up for a great 2023.

**Prep Early** The key to giving yourself space to enjoy the holiday season is to prepare. Rather than scrambling at the last minute to come up with the perfect Thanksgiving meal or checking off every item on your Christmas shopping list, begin now. Start to get ready. Do a little each day. Organize your plans on paper. Enlist help. When the holidays do arrive, you'll be ready and calm and able to enjoy every moment.

**Declutter** This is a great time of year to declutter your home, your computer files, and your financial records. When the new year arrives, you'll likely turn your attention to taxes and getting back to work, so before you take a delightful rest at the end of the year, clean house. Your future self will be so grateful.

**Reflect** Now that the year is winding down, take a moment to assess how you've done. Are you doing what you aimed to do at the beginning of the year? Are you maintaining the habits that you hoped to maintain? Are you on track to accomplish the goals that you set for yourself? On paper, write out the major areas of your life—family, career, spirituality, fitness, and so forth—and define how you would like those to be going. The countdown to midnight on Dec. 31 isn't the time to begin setting your intentions for the year to come. That time is now. Start thinking about it, enjoy the buffer time that you have during this last quarter of the year, and set yourself up for an even better year next year.

**Learn** There's always more to learn. What have you been interested in lately? Take on that interest by reading books on it, connecting with experts in that field, taking a class on the subject, or tinkering with a combination of any of these.

**Exercise** If you've fallen off the fitness wagon, get



Rather than scrambling at the last minute, it might be a good idea to start your Christmas shopping list now, if you haven't yet.

## The key to giving yourself space to enjoy the holiday season is to prepare.

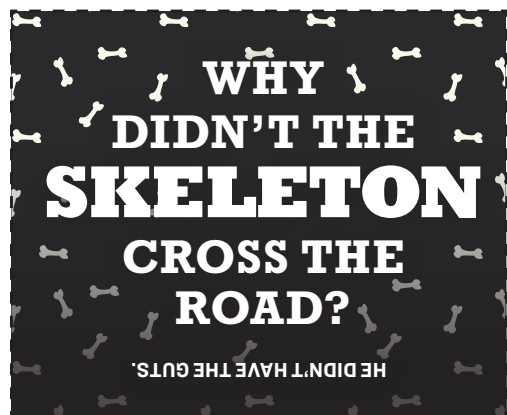
back on now. Don't be one of the crowd that's headed to the gym for the first time in ages on Jan. 2. Start now. Choose some form of exercise that you genuinely enjoy and improve your consistency in this area. There's no reason to wait until Jan. 1 to begin to improve yourself.

**Reconnect** We've all been through a lot these past few years. Might it be time to reconnect in person with more friends and family? Begin reaching out, sending invitations, and bringing back into your life the warmth of the relationships that makes life rich.



# FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES



WHY DIDN'T THE SKELETON CROSS THE ROAD?  
HE DIDN'T HAVE THE GUTS.

GOOSEFROD/SHUTTERSTOCK



Villainy wears many masks, none so dangerous as the mask of virtue.

WASHINGTON IRVING (1783-1859), AMERICAN WRITER

EVERETT COLLECTION/SHUTTERSTOCK

## A Song of Harvest

By John Greenleaf Whittier

This day, two hundred years ago,  
The wild grape by the river's side,  
And tasteless groundnut trailing low,  
The table of the woods supplied.

Unknown the apple's red and gold,  
The blushing tint of peach and pear;  
The mirror of the Powow told  
No tale of orchards ripe and rare.

Wild as the fruits he scorned to till,  
These vales the idle Indian trod;  
Nor knew the glad, creative skill,  
The joy of him who toils with God.

O Painter of the fruits and flowers!  
We thank Thee for thy wise design  
Whereby these human hands of ours  
In Nature's garden work with Thine.

And thanks that from our daily need  
The joy of simple faith is born;  
That he who smites the summer weed,  
May trust Thee for the autumn corn.

Give fools their gold, and knaves their power;  
Let fortune's bubbles rise and fall;  
Who sows a field, or trains a flower,  
Or plants a tree, is more than all.

For he who blesses most is blest;  
And God and man shall own his worth  
Who toils to leave as his bequest  
An added beauty to the earth.

And, soon or late, to all that sow,  
The time of harvest shall be given;  
The flower shall bloom, the fruit shall grow,  
If not on earth, at last in heaven.



DUJENSKA NADIVA/SHUTTERSTOCK

By Aidan Danza

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY BOGDAN FLORESCU/THE EPOCH TIMES



## PASENGER JET SERVICE TAKES FLIGHT



On Oct. 26, 1958, the Boeing 707 entered into service for Pan American World Airways, launching the phenomenon of commercial air travel. Its first flight departed New York for Paris. It took eight hours and 41 minutes, including a stop in Newfoundland, Canada, for refueling. The 707 remained in production until 1991. Boeing continues to be a premier manufacturer of aircraft.



## THE COMMON RAVEN



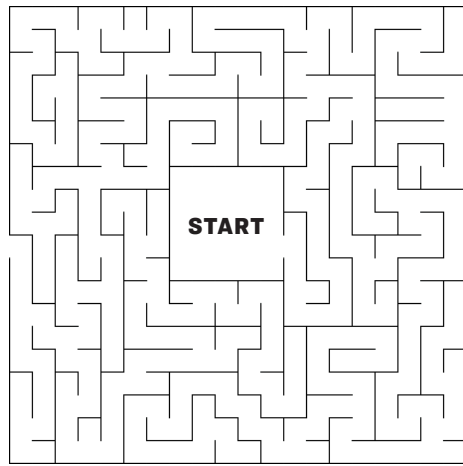
There is no more fitting bird for the time of Halloween than the raven.

They are black, extremely large and intelligent, and Edgar Allan Poe's choice bird for his aptly titled poem "The Raven," which details a raven driving a man insane. In fact, the raven is an extremely intelligent and interesting bird.

While the raven's harsh call certainly falls short of song, the common raven is technically the world's largest songbird, with a length of more than two feet and weighing in at up to 3½ pounds. Ravens are entirely black, including their legs, bills, and eyes, and they tend to live in cold places or at high altitudes, meaning that they are absent from much of the lower 48 states, living only west of the Rockies, in the Appalachians, and in far Northern parts of New England and the Great Lakes. They are widespread throughout Canada and Alaska, however. Around the rest of the world, they are present in the same Northern, mountainous, forested habitats in which they are found in North America. Scientists classify the raven with the jays, crows, and magpies. Just like these species,

the raven is extremely intelligent. It is thought that ravens can collaboratively solve complex problems, which is a characteristic of intelligence. Some experiments done on ravens show that the raven is as intelligent, if not more intelligent, than chimpanzees and orangutans. In the wild, this translates to behaviors like following people to find food and caching a large food source. They also display clear evidence of relatively complex communication. The raven's various sounds have been documented quite thoroughly, and scientists believe that the raven has anywhere from fifteen to thirty-three categories of communications, including alarm calls, calls given while chasing another raven, and calls for advertising a territory. Young ravens will actually explore their voice box, seemingly going through all the sounds that they can possibly make for up to hours at a time. Ravens also communicate through physical displays, which can range from threatening displays to affectionate allopreening (arranging another raven's feathers). For food, they will eat almost anything, but the stomachs of dead ravens seem to include mostly mammal meat, which suggests that roadkill is a large part of the diet. They will also eat all sorts of seeds, nuts, and plant material, and they can also kill and eat birds up to the size of a pigeon.

## AMAZING ESCAPES!



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, - AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: 6 + (7 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1 + (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1

6	9
6	11
6	7

Solution For Easy 1  
L - 9 × (9 - 6)

Medium puzzle 1

11	20
11	82
11	17

Solution for Medium 1  
L1 - 11 × (11 - 02)

Hard puzzle 1

8	28
2	54
2	17

Solution for Hard 1  
8 - 82 ÷ 2 × 1



HIDDEN TREASURES by Liz Ball  
www.HiddenPicturePuzzles.com

WORD SEARCH: Trick or Treat?

F	E	A	R	D	G	R	U	E	S	O	M	E	A	P
P	I	R	A	T	E	B	F	L	K	C	A	T	N	H
M	R	X	S	T	E	V	A	F	I	R	A	E	G	
A	A	I	H	W	H	M	I	A	N	B	S	I	E	N
S	O	G	N	T	E	V	R	L	G	P	K	T	L	T
K	I	O	I	C	D	E	Y	L	R	O	B	O	T	O
N	O	A	N	C	E	V	T	O	S	T	X	G	D	M
M	R	O	J	O	M	S	C	S	P	E	A	S	T	
W	I	O	A	M	O	N	S	T	E	R	I	Y	W	A
I	A	S	F	A	N	G	S	U	C	S	K	U	L	L
Z	F	T	O	Q	F	D	T	T	R	O	L	L	I	
A	K	O	D	U	Z	E	B	O	E	E	R	I	E	
R	O	F	G	E	T	E	O	M	R	P	W	E	S	N
D	S	C	R	E	A	M	N	B	S	U	R	I	P	G
S	T	R	A	N	G	E	E	L	F	S	O	O	G	Y

- |        |          |         |        |
|--------|----------|---------|--------|
| Alien  | Fog      | Scream  | Troll  |
| Angel  | Gruesome | Skull   | Tutu   |
| Bat    | King     | Specter | Wand   |
| Beast  | Magic    | Spell   | Web    |
| Bone   | Mask     | Strange | Wig    |
| Cat    | Mist     | Sweets  | Wizard |
| Corpse | Monster  | Toga    | Wraith |
| Creepy | Moon     | Robot   | Tomb   |
| Demon  | Night    |         |        |
| Devil  | Ninja    |         |        |
| Eerie  | Phantom  |         |        |
| Elf    | Pirate   |         |        |
| Fairy  | Princess |         |        |
| Fall   | Queen    |         |        |
| Fangs  | RIP      |         |        |
| Fear   | Robot    |         |        |

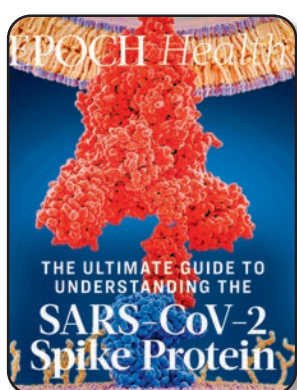


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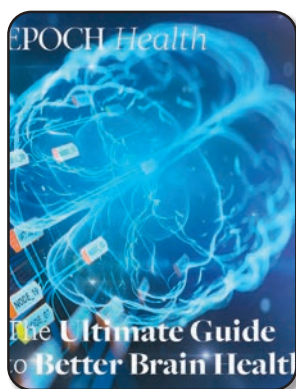
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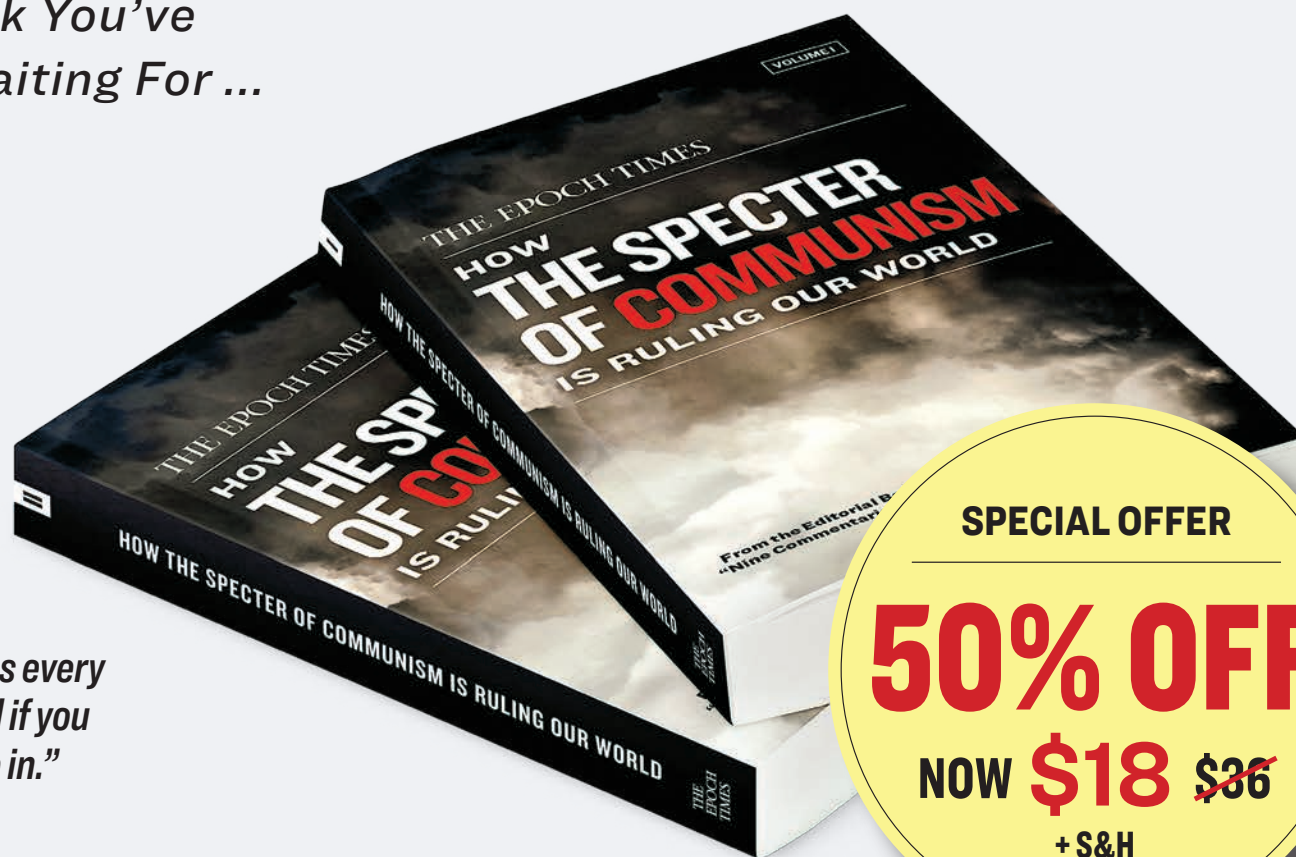
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